United Nations A/54/602

General Assembly

Distr.: General
11 November 1999
English
Original: Arabic

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 113

Programme of activities of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People

Report of the Third Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Naif Bin Bandar **Al-Sudairy** (Saudi Arabia)

I. Introduction

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 17 September 1999, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled "Programme of activities of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People" and to allocate it to the Third Committee.

2. The Third Committee considered the item at its 28th, 33rd and 39th meetings, on 1, 4 and 9 November 1999. An account of the Committee's discussion of the item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.3/54/SR.28, 33 and 39).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General A/54/487 and Add.1;

(b) Letter dated 15 October 1999 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the communiqué of the meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in New York on 23 September 1999 (A/54/469).

4. At the 28th meeting, on 1 November, an introductory statement was made by the Director of the New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (see A/C.3/54/SR.28).

99-34075 (E) 161199

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.45

5. At the 33rd meeting, on 4 November, the representative of Denmark, on behalf of Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Iceland, Latvia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International Decade of the World's Indigenous People" (A/C.3/54/L.45). Subsequently, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Russian Federation and Solomon Islands joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

6. In introducing the draft resolution, the representative of Denmark orally corrected operative paragraph 8 by inserting the word "possible" before the word "establishment".

7. At the 39th meeting, on 9 November, the Secretary read out a statement of the programme budget implications of the draft resolution.

8. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.45, as orally corrected, without a vote (see para. 9).

III. Recommendation of the Third Committee

9. The Third Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

International Decade of the World's Indigenous People

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 53/129 of 9 December 1998 and previous resolutions on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People,

Recalling also that the goal of the Decade is to strengthen international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health and that the theme of the Decade is "Indigenous people: partnership in action",

Recognizing the importance of consultation and cooperation with indigenous people in planning and implementing the programme of activities of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People,[1] the need for adequate financial support from the international community, including support from within the United Nations system, and the need for adequate coordination and communication channels,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the programme of activities of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People;[2]

2. *Affirms its conviction* of the value and diversity of the cultures and forms of social organization of indigenous people and its conviction that the development of

[1] Resolution 50/157, annex.

[2] A/54/487 and Add.1.

indigenous people within their countries will contribute to the socio-economic, cultural and environmental advancement of all the countries of the world;

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of strengthening the human and institutional capacity of indigenous people to develop their own solutions to their problems and, in this context, welcomes the holding of the Workshop on Higher Education and Indigenous Peoples at San José, Costa Rica, from 28 June to 2 July 1999, and requests the Commission on Human Rights to consider the recommendations of the Workshop;[3]

4. *Takes note* of the mid-term report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in her capacity as coordinator of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People,[4] reviewing the implementation of the programme of activities of the Decade, and of the information contained therein about the activities of the United Nations system, including specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations, relating to indigenous people, and urges all parties concerned to intensify their efforts to achieve the goals of the Decade;

5. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as coordinator of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People:

(a) To continue to promote the objectives of the Decade, taking into account, in the fulfilment of her functions, the special concerns of indigenous people;

(b) To give due regard to the dissemination, from within existing resources and voluntary contributions, of information on the situation, cultures, languages, rights and aspirations of indigenous people and, in that context, to consider the possibility of organizing projects, special events, exhibitions and other activities addressed to the public, in particular to young people;

(c) To submit, through the Secretary-General, an annual report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the programme of activities of the Decade;

6. *Reaffirms* the adoption of a declaration on the rights of indigenous people as a major objective of the Decade, and underlines the importance of effective participation by indigenous representatives in the open-ended inter-sessional working group of the Commission on Human Rights established pursuant to Commission resolution 1995/32 of 3 March 1995;[5]

7. *Also reaffirms*, among the objectives of the Decade listed in the programme of activities, the consideration of the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system;

8. *Urges* Governments to participate actively in the open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group that the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1999/52 of 27 April 1999[6] decided to re-establish from within existing overall United Nations resources, which is to meet for eight working days prior to the fifty-sixth session of the Commission to submit, with a view to completing its task, one or more concrete proposals on the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system;

9. *Decides* that the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/131 of 13 December 1985 and

---

[3] See E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1999/5, para. 62.

[4] E/CN.4/1999/81.

[5] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 3* and corrigenda (E/1995/23 and Corr.1 and 2), chap. II, sect. A.

[6] Ibid., *1999, Supplement No. 3* (E/1999/23), chap. II, sect. A.

modified by Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/32 and Assembly resolutions 50/156 of 21 December 1995 and 53/130 of 9 December 1998, should also be used to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to participate in the deliberations of the open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group of the Commission on Human Rights re-established according to Commission resolution 1999/52;

10. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations for the work it has accomplished;

11. *Encourages* Governments to support the Decade by:

(a) Preparing relevant programmes, plans and reports in relation to the Decade, in consultation with indigenous people;

(b) Seeking means, in consultation with indigenous people, of giving indigenous people greater responsibility for their own affairs and an effective voice in decisions on matters that affect them;

(c) Establishing national committees or other mechanisms involving indigenous people to ensure that the objectives and activities of the Decade are planned and implemented on the basis of full partnership with indigenous people;

(d) Contributing to the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People;

(e) Contributing, together with other donors, to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations in order to assist indigenous representatives in participating in the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of the Commission on Human Rights, the open-ended inter-sessional working group charged with developing a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous people and the re-established open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group on the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system;

(f) Considering contributing, as appropriate, to the Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean, in support of the goals of the Decade;

(g) Identifying resources for activities designed to implement the goals of the Decade, in cooperation with indigenous people and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;

12. *Welcomes* the offer of the Government of Spain to host at Seville in February 2000 the first meeting of the ad hoc open-ended inter-sessional working group on article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity[7] regarding the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities, and encourages Governments to include representatives of indigenous and local communities in their delegations to the meeting;

13. *Invites* United Nations financial and developmental institutions, operational programmes and the specialized agencies, as well as other regional and international organizations, in accordance with the existing procedures of their governing bodies:

(a) To give increased priority and resources to improving the conditions of indigenous people, with particular emphasis on the needs of those people in developing

[7] See United Nations Environment Programme, *Convention on Biological Diversity* (Environmental Law and Institution Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.

countries, including through the preparation of specific programmes of action for the implementation of the goals of the Decade, within their areas of competence;

(b) To launch special projects, through appropriate channels and in cooperation with indigenous people, to strengthen their community-level initiatives and to facilitate the exchange of information and expertise among indigenous people and other relevant experts;

(c) To designate focal points for the coordination of activities related to the Decade with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

and commends those institutions, programmes, agencies and regional and international organizations that have already done so;

14. *Recommends* that the Secretary-General ensure coordinated follow-up to the recommendations concerning indigenous people of relevant United Nations conferences, namely, the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3 to 14 June 1992, the International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994, the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995, the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held at Istanbul, Turkey, from 3 to 14 June 1996, and the World Food Summit, held at Rome from 13 to 17 November 1996, and other relevant international conferences;

15. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to submit, through the Secretary-General, a report on the implementation of the programme of activities of the Decade to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session;

16. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fifth session the item entitled "Programme of activities of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People".